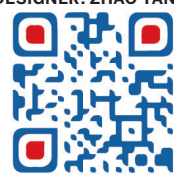


BEIJING TODAY

METRO



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The Emperor within

After a decade abroad, artist Zhao Gang is back to exhibit his last decade of inspired works.

His new solo exhibition, "The Emperor and His....," opened April 13 in Aye Gallery. the paintings show Zhao's understanding of humanity and the world around him.

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Water jumps to 5 yuan per ton

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

Beijing is preparing to raise its water prices from the current 4 yuan per ton to 5 yuan per ton to bring water costs "in line with other world cities."

The proposed tiered pricing system would raise the price after the first 180 tons of water and provide a 0.05 yuan per ton discount to households that use less than 145 tons.

Additional tiers will be priced 7 yuan and 9 yuan.

At a public hearing on the price hike on April 18, city officials said the hike was being targeted to curb water use in the home.

In spite of its relative scarcity, Beijing's water is among the world's cheapest.

Copenhagen charges \$9 (56 yuan) per ton, while Berlin charges \$6.60. Paris and Sydney both charge more than \$4 per ton.

The South-North Water Transfer Proj-



Running water is becoming dangerous in the country.

CFP Photo

ect, due to be completed this year, will begin introducing water from the Yangtze River to the Danjiangkou Reservoir in Hubei Province.

Beijing is rapidly running out of water. The government's official estimate is that underground reservoirs have been so depleted that there is now a 12.4 meter high cavern under the city where its water used to be.

The capital has consumed nearly 6.5 billion cubic meters of underground water since 1998.

The Miyun Reservoir in northern Beijing is expected to be the first to receive water from the new underground pipeline. Each year, the reservoir will absorb 125 thousand cubic meters of water from the pipeline.

Water introduced from Hubei Province will be tentatively priced at 3 yuan per ton. This price does not factor in additional fees which will be needed to cover construction costs on the 2,000-kilometer pipeline.

Grads abandon Tencent, Baidu to sell street food

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

In Wudaokou, the lines at a new stand selling roujiamo extend for more than 20 minutes.

There's no question of Xishaoye's popularity. In the last 11 days, the store has created a social media buzz and a loyal following among the area's IT workers.

But it's not the crispy fried bread or seasoned meat that is helping Xishaoye make headlines: it's the audacity of its founders, a team of college-educated engineers and chemists who gave up on their industry to make street food.

An unexpected future

"Xishaoye's roujiamo is the best," says an IT technician surnamed Tong. "The meat is juicy and the bun is fried to just the right level of crispiness."

Tong is one of many who stand in line for more than 20 minutes to get lunch at Xishaoye, a new fast food stand run by Meng Bing, Luo Gaojing, Song Xin and Yuan Zelu.

At 1 pm, Meng flips around the store's placard to announce it is "sold out." The founders exit the booth and grab a seat under an umbrella to discuss their business.

Xishaoye is located in the heart of China's IT industry, surrounded by major players like Netease, Sohu, Google, Baidu, Tencent and Alibaba.

And less than a year ago, that was where the stores founders worked.

Meng, Luo, Song and Yuan are all science graduates from Xi'an Jiaotong University. Meng holds a degree in automation, Luo in computer engineering and



Xi'shaoye and his team sells roujiamo in Wudaokou

CFP Photo

Song in chemical engineering.

Yuan, who is not currently with the group, studied management science.

After graduation, the four landed jobs with major IT firms like Baidu and Tencent. It seemed like a path to success.

"I liked working in a big company and focused on IT, but at the same time we felt like youth was our time to explore and do something different," Meng said.

After only six months in Tencent, Meng decided to quit his job. His parents, naturally, were highly opposed. Meng transferred to Baidu and worked for another year.

Online promotion

With little money to advertise their roujiamo stand, Meng and his friends turned to the Internet. The group has made heavy use of social media networks

like Sina Weibo and WeChat.

Pictures of the food attracted many customers, especially nearby IT technicians.

To make their roujiamo "the best," Meng returned to Xi'an and worked through 2,500 kilograms of flour and 1,000 kilograms of filling until he had mastered the art of street food.

"We had to give up the plan to fry them over an open fire. Beijing prevents the use of wood or coal ovens, so we have to use an electric oven to make our roujiamo," Meng said.

The food is folded inside paper imported from the US to ensure each roujiamo stays crispy for several hours.

Most stores in Beijing sell roujiamo for 9 to 10 yuan: Xishaoye sells its roujiamo for 7 yuan. Additionally, it offers free food to anyone who presents a business card and identification to show they

work in a nearby IT company.

The store also offers free chewing gum, free bottled water and free access to power strips and phone chargers.

Reflection from public

Meng and his team have spent heavily on drawing customers into their shop, but it's difficult to understand their long-term plans.

But the bigger question – at least domestically – is why a team of engineers would bail on their industry to start a fast food stand.

Even after three decades of economic reform, the idea of graduates starting a business rings kooky on Chinese ears.

"This is really something we've never seen before in China," said Lai Yang, secretary of Beijing Commercial Economy Institute, in discussing the roujiamo shop. "I guess the question is whether they can create a unique enough taste and utilize technology to promote their business."

Lai said, thus far, the business appears to be poorly planned. "They are still relying on gimmicks to bring people in. I don't think their success can last long," he said.

"This is not a model to emulate."

Wang Jun, a professor of social science at Peking University, sees the stand as a sign of desperation. "With rocketing real estate prices and stagnant wages preventing professionals from settling down, it's no surprise that they have no interest in continuing to research and study within their field," he said.

"IT graduates will try any business to find another route to success," he said. "In some sense, it's a sad waste of an education."

New regulation plugs holes in corrupt school admissions



By LIU XIAOCHEN
Beijing Today Staff

For the first time, the enrollment system of Beijing's schools is being standardized and united under one plan. According to a new policy released by the city government on April 18, children will be required to enroll at their nearest primary or middle school, canceling the long-running "co-construction system," one of several special admission tracks mired in pointless testing and bribes. While the policy change may be an upsetting shock for many parents, it may alleviate Beijing's traffic problems and level its academic playing field.

No more exams

The days of having having "entrance exams" for elementary school may be over.

According to the new policy by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, children six or older who have *hukou*, a registered household, in Beijing can be admitted to their nearest primary school without any exam.

After primary school, the local education commission will assign students to a middle school according to the school's capacity, size and traffic situation.

Middle schools will be required to accept all assigned students before offering any space to special admission, which may only be granted using a randomized lottery.

Li Yi, a spokesman for the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, said the new system slams the door on bribery and favors.

"From the beginning of this year, all school-age children must connect to the education system to fill out their personal. The Beijing Municipal Commission of Education will monitor the whole process. False information will be promptly investigated," he said.

"Parents have only one opportunity to register their child, and cross-district registration is forbidden," Li said.

Beijing first proposed revising the elementary and middle school admission systems in 1993. During this time, it created the co-construction system, an admission track for "students with special skills" and boarding schools.

Companies, ministries unite

The co-construction system has been used for the last 11 years. In accordance with city policy, schools were open to three kinds of admission: random assignment, excellent recommendation and co-construction.

Co-construction referred to a three-party cooperation between China's central ministries, large enterprises and schools. The ministries and companies would provide financial support to select schools in exchange for reserved enrollment positions.

Generally speaking, these schools have been among the city's best.

"Co-construction units supported the schools with advanced facilities that they could not otherwise afford," said Chu Zhaohui, a researcher at the Chinese



Students will not need to attend middle school entrance exams after the policy change.

CFP Photos

Research Institute of Education Science.

Students who entered through the co-construction system were not limited by administrative region, school status, place of residence or *hukou*.

According to a report from 21st Century Education Research Institute, students from the co-construction system account for nearly 10 percent of Beijing's yearly enrollment. Beijing No.8 Middle School, a key middle school in Xicheng District, enrolled 17 percent of students through the co-construction system in 2011.

That number could be even higher, as it is impossible to obtain records about which students were already on the co-creation track in elementary school, *Caixin* magazine reported.

Since 2010, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education has regulated how many students can enter through the co-construction system.

Other students with poor scores who want to enter a strong middle school have paid bribes to the schools in exchange for "special consideration."

The latest enrollment changes would also cancel out this track of admission.

Problems solved or created?

Proponents of the new policy point to how it will help to balance the flow of students, and over time the quality of education services offered by schools in

different districts.

"China's past education policy was too focused on efficiency. It was a move that caused deep disparity between the educational services offered by schools," said Meng Fanhua, vice principal of Beijing Normal University. "Now the goal is to make access to education both fair and balanced."

"The transition from elementary to middle school is the easiest place to fix," said Liu Yongsheng, vice head of the Elementary Education Committee at China Education Society. "The Municipal Education Commission's series of reforms support making school districts that are fair to all."

Chu said the new policy makes the differences between school less apparent. He said the government should also pass teacher management measures to make ensure a more equitable distribution of skilled educators.

From 2014, school principals no longer have the final say on enrollment. At the same time, each education commission has limited power to influence the process.

"This attempt to balance the quality of compulsory education within a district could end the idea of there being good schools, bad schools or power manipulators. It would fundamentally fix a lot of the problems with Chinese education," said Xiong Bingqi, vice president of 21st Century Education Research Institute.

"This policy could save many parents from the headache of competing for school admission."

But the effects may be limited if the city is only extending its regulations to school admission instead of school management. Changes to the administrative management system are also necessary, Xiong said.

The policy change may also solve problems in some other areas. It may reduce traffic during peak hours since students will be attending the nearest possible school.

But many parents see the new rules as a slap in the face.

Many on the city's notoriously less developed south side are worried that their children will lose their chance to attend "key schools." The policy may also cause rapid inflation of real estate prices in schools that are zoned for better middle schools.

"Some parents who have small children buy a house just to get access to a school later on," said Xian Lianping, head of Beijing Municipal Education Commission. "In fact, we expect education resources to slowly even out, so house locations should matter less in the future. The task at hand is speeding up this process."

"All districts and counties have excellent teaching resources. Now is the time to start using them to bring the weaker schools up," he said.

Zhao Gang returns with oil



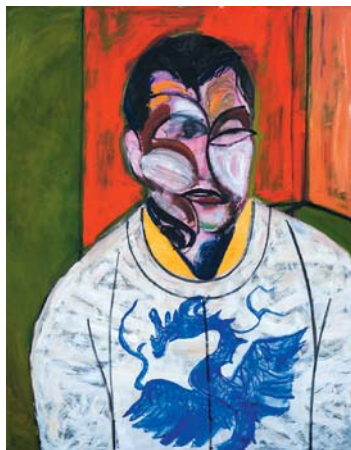
Zhao Gang



Warrior



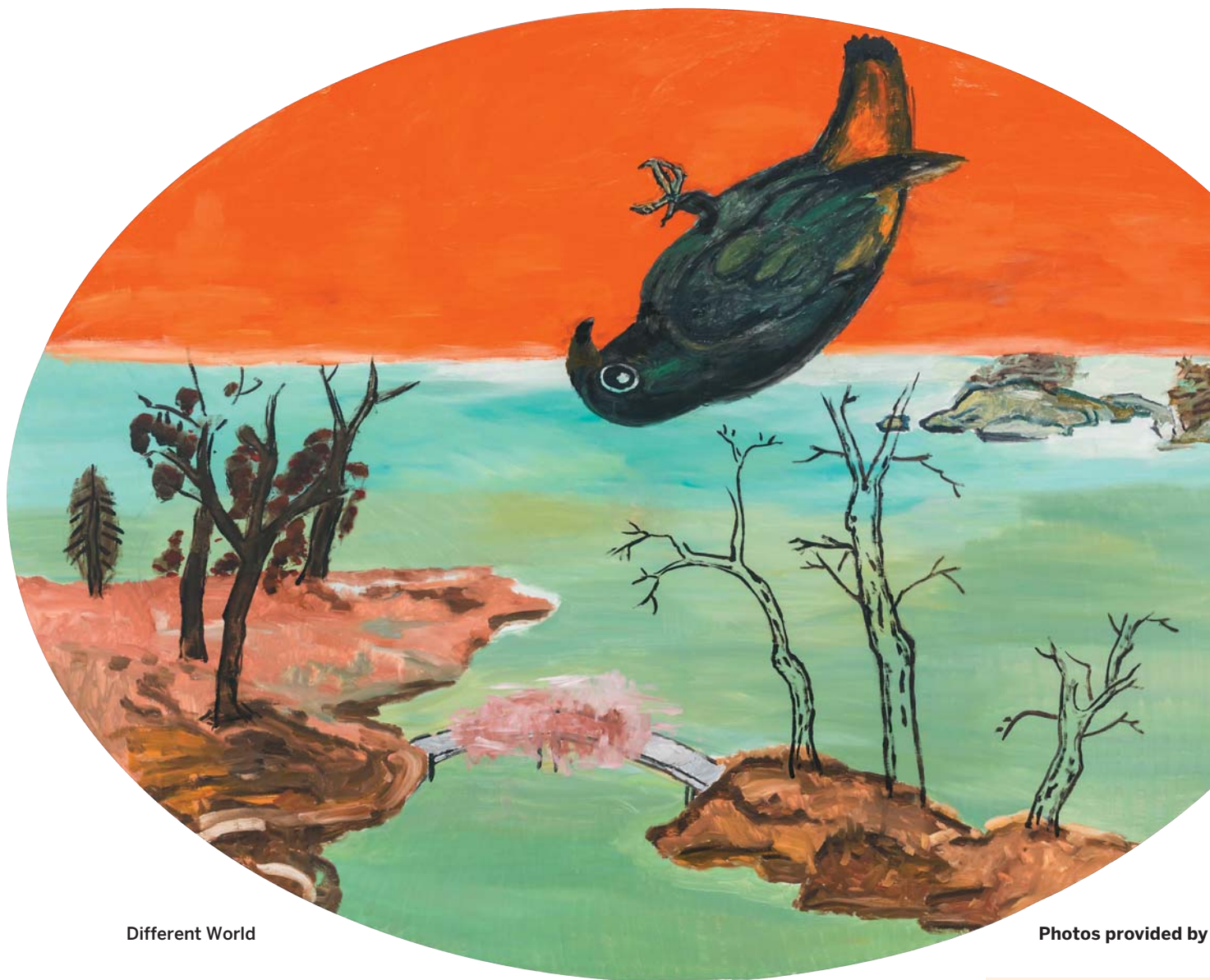
Thinker



Farmer



Another World



Different World

Photos provided by

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

After a decade spent abroad in the New York art scene, painter Zhao Gang is back to exhibit his last decade of creation.

The exhibition, which opened April 13 in Yonghe Community, has attracted art market observers, commentators, reporters and general art lovers.

Titled "The Emperor and His...", the paintings capture Zhao's impressions about people around the world.

Zhao was born in 1961 in Beijing. Like many children born into the Cultural Revolution, he was politically active during his childhood.

By the 1970s, Zhao was deeply concerned about the future of his country. He joined the Star Art Exhibition, an event widely regarded as the beginning of China's "new art" movement, and learned from catalogs of impressionist paintings at a friend's home.

Inspired by French Impressionist painters of the 19th century, Zhao sent many of his inspired worked to the exhibition. He believed that "after the failure of the Culture Revolution," artists should create something different.

The move got his family denounced as an enemy of the people and all its property confiscated.

As China rolled into the 1980s, Zhao became torn between Mao Zedong's call for class warfare and Deng Xiaoping's call for the pursuit of profits.

Zhao, unable to adapt to the changing times, moved first to Europe and then to the US. He studied new schools of painting, and eventually settled in New York, where he worked as a painter, publisher and art broker.

"I've learned that everyone is his own emperor, and the only emperor in his world," Zhao said. "We live in a world of many emperors, no matter whether you agree or not."

Zhao moved back to China in 2007, and has mostly been working as an oil painter. "Zhao Gang's works are a personal breakthrough," said Zhou Yang, a professor at the Central Academy of Contemporary Arts. "Today he is fully immersed in the creative process."

Aye Gallery

Where: Room 601, Unit3, Yonghe Garden, Yard 3, Dong Binhe Lu, Andingmen, Dongcheng District (take Exit D at Yonghegong Station, cross the street on the northeast side and enter the nearest community)

When: 10am-6pm (appointment required)

Tel: 8422 1726 / 1030

Email: aye@ayegallery.com

Website: ayegallery.com

Q&A

Q: Your oil painting is deliberately unclear, either the face or the whole body. What are you trying to convey in your work?

A: I try to avoid conveying a clear message or criticizing a group. I just record the impression of the world, give meusing colors and that stress their character.

Q: Are you worried about the recent turmoil in the art market driving potential buyers away?

A: Artists don't create the market. They create the market. That's why I've enjoyed the most.

Q: Where do you see your work going next?

A: After two decades, I've learned an awful lot about the world of art. I've found that painting is still what I love. After trying my hand at many things, I consider painting and my good fortune.

exhibition



Yuan Zuo

Huangshan as a symphony of light and color

By ZHAO HONGYI
Beijing Today Staff

In a warzone of artists scrambling for visitors' attention, Yuan Zuo's solo exhibition at 798 Art Bridge Gallery is a breath of fresh air.

Born in 1957, Yuan is a highly productive artist more concerned with his craft than fame. He graduated from the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1981 and continued his studies abroad at the Massachusetts College of Arts under the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Through the works at "Light, Color and Space," his new exhibition, Yuan shares numerous creations based on his tours of Huangshan and the Yellow River. His vibrant colors give a fresh impression of natural beauty.

Although his creations are made with foreign pigments and brush techniques, the way he describes the relationship between man and nature relies on line, color and light to convey a sense of emotion – the approach for which Chinese ink painting is most famous.

Many have called Yuan's art an extension of

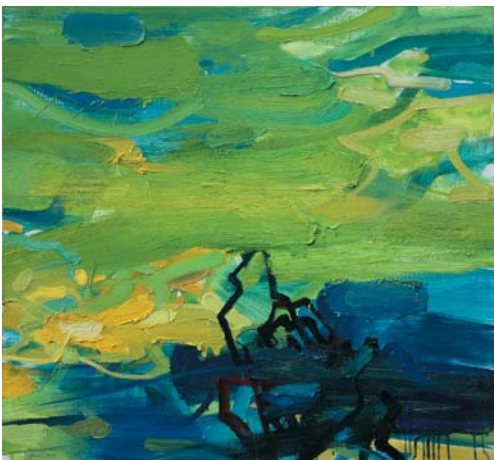
impressionism, but Yuan rejects the classification. "My trips to Huangshan changed me. She introduced me to the world of light, color, beauty and passion," Yuan wrote in his foreword to the exhibition.

"Yuan Zuo shows a reverence for traditional Chinese painting and philosophy," said Ni Jun, an artist and producer at CCTV Channel 10.

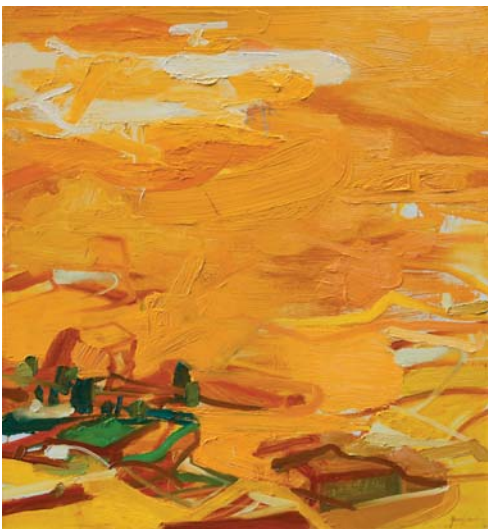
Yuan's past stateside exhibitions include "The Vision of China" in 1982, "Garden, Mountains, Confusion" in 2002 and "Rethinking Tradition" in 2011 at the Harvard Neighbors Art Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

He is currently a visiting professor at the Massachusetts College of Arts and assistant professor at the Tsinghua University College of Arts.

798 Art Bridge Gallery
Where: D09-1 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: April 19 to May 21
Tel: 6433 1798, 13701085886
Web: chinaacn.com, artron.net, 99ys.com



Walking on the Yellow Mountain 2



Walking on the Yellow Mountain 3



Walking on the Yellow Mountain 4



Walking on the Yellow Mountain 1 Photos provided by Art Bridge Gallery

Aye Gallery

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Bookstore death a symptom of publishing in peril

By DIAO DIAO
Beijing Today Intern

Sales in traditional brick-and-mortar bookstores have been tumbling for much of the last decade. It's a trend that's been blamed on increased preference for free material online and Web retailers who sell their tomes at steep discounts.

With the industry in freefall, the local Sanlian Bookstore had to take a gamble.

Last week, the chain held a 10-day-long trial operation as a 24-hour bookstore. Manager Fan Xi'an declared the experiment a success, stating that the store made more than 25,000 yuan in sales on most nights.

Sanlian is not the first bookseller to experiment with round-the-clock sales.

Shanghai's Dazhong Bookstore tried the same in 2012 before concluding that the extra sales were not enough to cover the costs of night operations. Chengpin Books in Hong Kong canceled a similar attempt after one month.

Bookstores have been scrambling to draw in readers as business shrinks. In recent years, famous bookstores such as Disanju in Beijing, Sanlian Bookstore in Guangzhou and Sikaole Bookstore in Shanghai have closed.

The death of the bookstore is a prominent symptom of the collapse of publishing.

The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) reported that more than 4,900 press and publishing companies closed in China in 2012.

Online bookstores certainly played a part, but by no means are they the whole problem. The very act of reading has changed.

As smartphones and tablets become increasingly advanced, more and more people are embracing the e-book: whether purchased or pirated.

Yu Guoming, head of the journalism department at Renmin University, said obsessing over price wars is one of the publishing industry's biggest mistakes. The real battleground is the change in reading habits being driven by new technology.

The day when the e-book completely displaces print media is not far off, he said.

Until then, tumbling profits are being amplified by the rocketing cost of commercial real estate. The owner of Zebra, a small bookstore near Communication University of China, said it is hard to stay open, even when neighboring restaurants and other businesses are doing well.

She said the only reason the business stays open is because she enjoys reading.

Liu Suli, founder of Wansheng Bookstores, sees a hope for the industry in its cultural connection. A new policy by the Ministry of Finance and SARFT distributed more than 90 million yuan in subsidies to 56 bookstores in 12 cities last year.

Sanlian Bookstore was one of the beneficiaries.

But an industry that survives on subsidies without providing an essential service will not survive long.

For many readers, the role of the bookstore in the new century seems to be the same as the clothing store: a place to sample products before buying online.

"I visit the bookstore to preview all the new published books. If I decide to buy, I'll buy online," said Wang Xinyu, who was visiting the Sanlian Bookstore on a weeknight.



A boy buys printed comics while the adult reads an e-book.

Photo by CFP

Gear up for spring camping

By DIAO DIAO
Beijing Today Intern

With temperatures high enough for hiking and low enough to still require a sleeping bag, May could be the most comfortable month for camping in the capital.

While choosing an appropriate place, planning a safe route and preparing for the unexpected are all important, quality hardware is also essential to ensure you have a safe and happy outing.

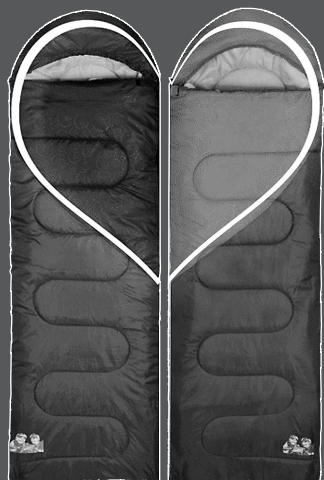
Outdoor conditions may change rapidly: quality camping gear will leave you better protected from the elements and other dangers.



Warm Coats



Shoes



Sleeping Bag



Tent
Photos by Taobao.com & Baidu.com

Tent

A durable, lightweight tent is the best choice for any destination. The material should be waterproof and the design resistant to high winds.

This double-deck tent can sleep three to four people. A mat and a lamp are also included. The material repels UV light and water, and it folds up into a small package for easy transportation.

Cost: 130 yuan

Web: detail.tmall.com/item.htm?id=22320860586

Sleeping Bag

Down sleeping bags are the best choice for dry areas. They are lightweight and help seal in warmth. For a more moist environment, choose an artificial, vacuumed cotton sleeping bag.

This sleeping bag is designed for couples. The two sleeping bags zip together in a heart shape. The bags are made of very flexible cotton and will not constrict the arms and legs when sleeping.

Cost: 140 yuan per pair (75 yuan single)

Web: detail.tmall.com/item.htm?id=15666434913

Backpacks

Good backpacks place their weight on the hips rather than the shoulders. This bag frees the back and spine from the bulk of the weight and keeps the contents safe with durable nylon. It has a maximum capacity of 55 liters. Two belts at the chest and the waist ensure stability when hiking.

Cost: 99 yuan

Web: item.taobao.com/item.htm?id=36221135625

Warm Coats

There is still a big difference between day and night-time temperatures, so it's a good idea to take a bulky coat.

Spring coats should be warm, but not smothering. This coat has small holes on the interior to keep the body dry and a windproof belt around the waist. The special cotton in the collar absorbs sweat from the neck.

Cost: 116 yuan

Web: detail.tmall.com/item.htm?id=37243537642

Shoes

Flexible shoes help prevent leg strain. For hiking, you will want a sole that is thick and soft.

This pair weighs only 120 grams and uses natural rubber to buffer the feet. The soles have skid-resistant patches and are designed to match the structure of foot.

Cost: 122 yuan

Web: detail.tmall.com/item.htm?id=37321545659

Others

Hats, sunglasses and sunblock are necessary on sunny days. It's also a good idea to pack a raincoat.

Carry a lighter and matches to start a fire. A compass is a must in case you get lost. Other necessities like multi-functional knife, strong rope and insect repellent should be on the list.

Don't forget to pack common medicines, antibiotic ointments and bandages in your first aid kit. For food, cured meat and sugar are the best energy suppliers.

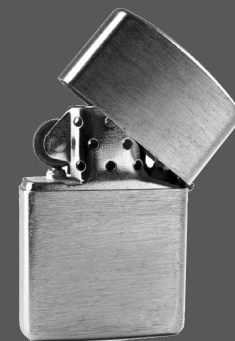
Most of these can be found in any neighborhood supermarket.



Backpacks



First aid kit



Lighter

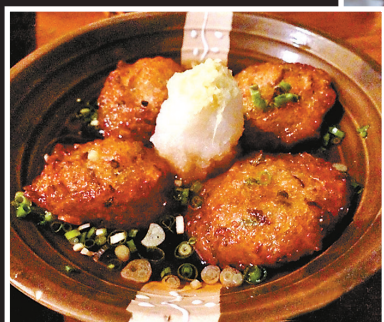


Multi-functional knife

After hours at authentic Japanese restaurants

By DIAO DIAO
Beijing Today Intern

Eager to copy the Japanese dining experience seen on popular TV dramas? Join two or three friends and head for one of this week's restaurants. Both have been praised by food critics for providing Beijing's most authentic Japanese dining experience.



Suzumei

In spite of its tiny interior, Suzumei is widely praised for its excellent and authentic Japanese cuisine and ambiance.

The restaurant is operated by a Japanese man and his Chinese-Indian wife. The two are open and enthusiastic, and almost as much of an attraction as the restaurant's cuisine.

Suzumei attracts a regular clientele of European and Japanese diners, as well as a few locals.

Unlike many restaurants, which brag about imported ingredients, Suzumei recreates the taste of Japan using locally sourced products. Diners with frequent experience in Japan say there is no difference and have especially praised Suzumei's sushi.

The most recommended dish is saira, a sushi made of roe and Japanese tofu. The restaurant's sushi are all hand-rolled and the rice is neither too tight nor too loose. The Japanese tofu is made fresh and free of any sauce.

Salmon and udon noodles are also popular choices.

If you're stopping by for a drink, Suzumei offers an excellent plum sake. The price is a little higher than at other Japanese restaurants, but the authentic taste makes it worth it.

Where: Building 6, Sanyuan Li, 2 Xinyuan Jie, Chaoyang District

When: 6pm-12am

Tel: 6466 0204

Izakaya Nonbei

Located on the west side by Beijing's universities, Izakaya Nonbei is especially popular with students.

The restaurant maintains a bar-like atmosphere with a large selection of Japanese wines and spirits.

Izakaya Nonbei has wooden tables and chairs and tatami floors. The head chef lived in Japan for many years and tries to create original Japanese dishes adapted for Chinese tastes.

Many of the waiters and waitresses are students working part time. They are friendly and provide good service.

As one might expect, seafood is the biggest attraction. Tuna sushi and scallops are the most ordered dishes.

The Izakaya's wines are all imported from Japan and pair well with an order of grilled kabobs.

Where: Jia 5, Xueqing Lu, Haidian District

When: 5-11 pm, Sundays-Thursdays; 5 pm-1:30 am, Fridays and Saturdays

Tel: 6295 6603



Japanese wines



Tatami floors



Photos by Dianping.com & Baidu.com



Sushi